



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 10 February 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
10 FEBRUARY 1968

1. South Vietnam
(as of 5:30 AM
EST)

Khe Sanh and the rest of South Vietnam were relatively quiet last night.

The Communists, however, may be preparing for a new round of attacks in several areas--possibly within the next few days. North Vietnamese forces all along the Demilitarized Zone appear set to attack, and there are major enemy concentrations near Danang. Farther south, elements of three Communist divisions are in position either to strike US positions not far from Saigon or assist in operations within the city itself. Some prisoners taken in the recent fighting predicted follow-up attacks within a week or ten days.

We have noted no unusual activity by North Vietnamese aircraft in the last 24 hours.

2. North Korea

Pyongyang's recent official statements show no change in its attitude toward the Pueblo case. The regime has so far made no public comment on the latest meeting at Panmunjom.

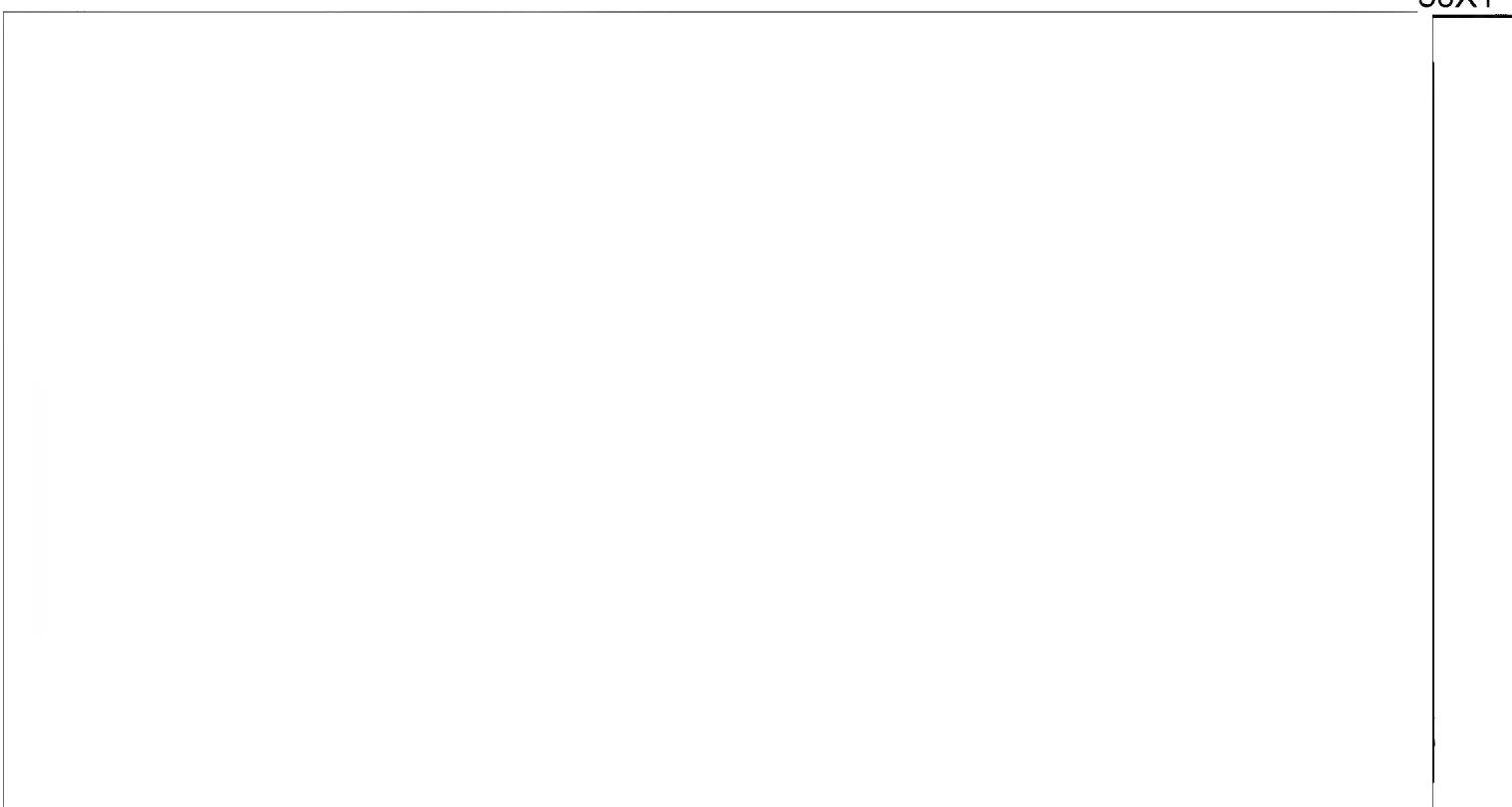
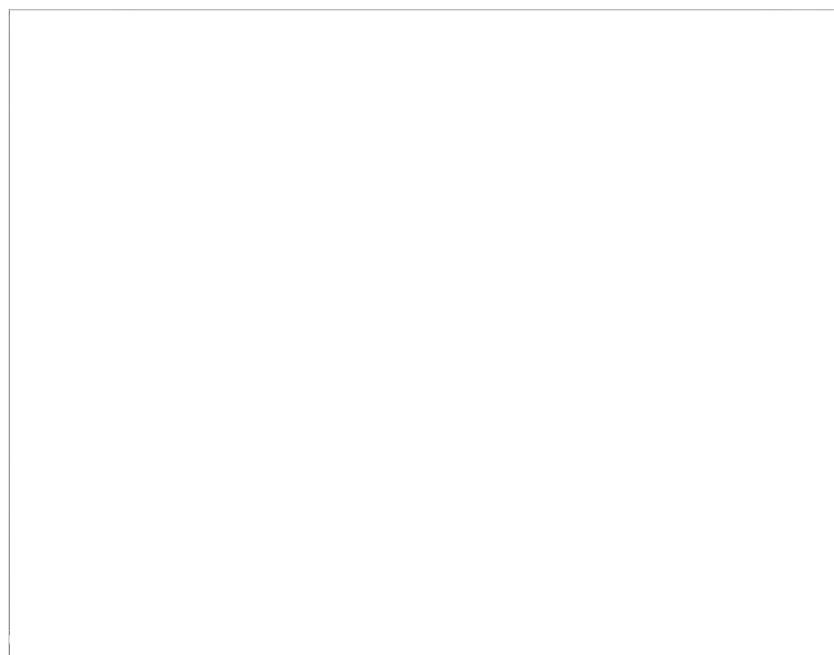
Soviet Party Secretary Ponomarev arrived in Pyongyang yesterday, where he will have a chance to take a reading of North Korean attitudes on the Pueblo affair.

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The main purpose of Ponomarev's visit, however, is probably to brief the North Koreans on the Budapest meeting of Communist parties scheduled for later this month. Ponomarev was in a high-level Soviet delegation that recently left Japan after trying unsuccessfully to persuade the Japanese Communist Party to attend.

3. Soviet Union

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4. Yemen

Satellite photography of late January shows the air strip the Soviets have been building at Taiz practically finished. Although it could take almost any kind of plane, it will be of little immediate military help to the republicans. There are no facilities for storing supplies, and the roads leading to the scene of the important fighting--far to the north--are generally blocked by the royalists.

5. Indonesia

The monumental economic mess inherited from Sukarno is keeping Suharto awake nights. Skyrocketing rice prices have already pushed the cost of living beyond the increase anticipated for all of 1968. The government's greatest worry is that Western aid donors will not meet the request for an economic assistance package of \$325 million.

Suharto wants no political sniping and yesterday announced a massive shake-up in the appointed parliament. Next, he will ask parliament to make him full president and to postpone the national elections scheduled for this summer.

6. Hong Kong

Peking is now stressing sweetness and light in its support of the colony's Communists. A donation of winter clothes for the "needy compatriots" arrived from China this week. Peking has also offered 5,000 tons of rice "to ease the plight of victimized workers."

This wolf-in-sheep's-clothing approach is consistent with Peking's directive to the local Communists last December, telling them to shift to a long-range "political struggle."

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Communist Propaganda on "Uprising" in South: Hanoi and Liberation Front propaganda continues to stress the "great revolutionary successes" under way in South Vietnam. Some of Hanoi radio's accounts are said to be based on direct reports from Communist correspondents in Saigon itself. The general pitch is that "revolutionary" forces, riding a crest of popular enthusiasm, are "liberating" more and more areas. They are said to be consolidating their control in a number of places by setting up "revolutionary administrative machinery," including "people's courts" to try and sentence "the puppet officials who owe many blood debts to the people."

Viet Cong radio broadcasts continue to surface new organizations allegedly composed of dissident South Vietnamese Army men and other groups opposing the Saigon regime. They insist that large numbers of people are rallying to their banners.

Hanoi's army daily on 8 February hails the recent action at Lang Vei as a "striking example of quick attack, complete annihilation, and holding the initiative on the battlefield." The paper says that this and other battles in Quang Tri Province are coordinated with those in the rest of the country, and that they provide great encouragement for Communist forces fighting in the cities.

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A New Moscow Statement on Vietnam: The statement issued by TASS yesterday is clearly aimed at underlining the main themes in recent Hanoi and Liberation Front propaganda about the "great successes" achieved in the current Communist offensive in South Vietnam. The TASS release goes on at length to claim that these successes were accomplished with "the active support" of the people of South Vietnam.

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The "camp of the patriotic forces" in South Vietnam, TASS claimed, has been enlarged further. Other "democratic and national forces" have come forward to join the National Liberation Front in the struggle. The events of the past ten days prove again, TASS claims, that the "Saigon regime" is rotten and is prevented from falling only by "US bayonets."

The TASS statement makes no mention of any new Soviet response to the situation in Vietnam. It does say that US "vandalism" in South Vietnam causes "anger on the part of the Soviet people," and that mass meetings are being held throughout the country to condemn the US.

The statement concludes with the declaration that if the US truly wants talks on settlement of the war, "then what prevents it from taking advantage of the proposals of the North Vietnamese Government and the Liberation Front?" Persistence in the war "can only bring new defeats and new failures to the US."

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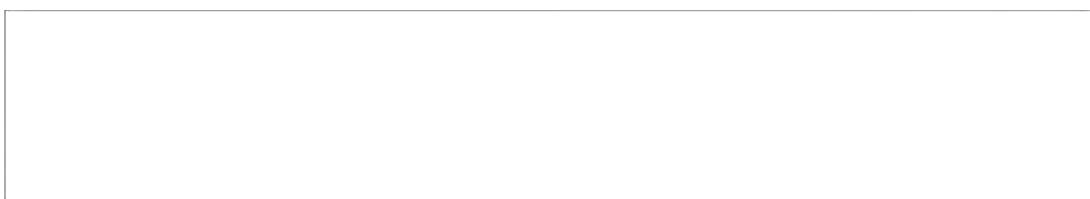
Defense Minister Giap Speaks: Hanoi seems to have gone out of its way to highlight the otherwise obscure occasion of North Korean Army Day. The attention may have been partly a gesture of support for the Pueblo capture, as well as for North Korean aid to the Vietnamese Communists.

North Vietnamese Defense Minister Giap apparently was a center of attention as he played his first ceremonial role in public for some months. Nothing he said provided any solid clues on Hanoi's intentions toward the war. Giap told an audience on 8 February that the Communist offensive in South Vietnam had created a "new situation" favorable for continuing the fight until "final victory." He took a similar line in a message to the North Koreans, in which he said the Vietnam conflict was entering a "fierce phase," but he made no suggestion that there would be any early end to the fighting.

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US Prisoners Fail to Leave Hanoi: The International Control Commission plane made its scheduled flight to Hanoi yesterday. When it returned to Laos, however, the three American pilots supposed to have been released were not aboard. The only explanation available so far is that the three prisoners (and the two Americans who had gone to escort them) "missed" the flight out of Hanoi.

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Front Spokesmen on Lang Vei: Continuing the recent round of press conferences held by Vietnamese Communist spokesmen, the Liberation Front's man in Prague told his audience on 8 February that Communist forces intend to maintain the offensive they have mounted against the allies in the past ten days. He reportedly claimed that the tanks used at Lang Vei were US tanks and had been brought over to the Communists by defecting South Vietnamese forces. Although the Communists have captured allied tanks in the past, aerial photography clearly shows the ones at Lang Vei were Soviet PT-76 amphibious models. The Front representative's comments doubtless were intended to maintain the fiction that North Vietnamese forces are not involved in the fighting in the South.

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More Communist Propaganda Claims: In addition to holding press conferences to publicize Viet Cong "victories" in South Vietnam, Liberation Front officials abroad are now apparently disseminating written propaganda on alleged Communist successes. The US Embassy in Vientiane reports that North Vietnamese press officials there have passed to Western correspondents a mimeographed handout entitled "Victories Gained by the Troops and Population of South Vietnam after Six Days of Combat." The document closely resembles the content of Liberation Front and North Vietnamese propaganda.

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Buddhist Monk Appeals for US Support of Communist Cause: Hanoi on 8 February broadcast what it claimed was a letter to the American people from a Buddhist monk who is vice president of the South Vietnam People's Committee for Solidarity with the American People, a Viet Cong front. The monk called upon the American people to "take stronger actions" to

demand that the US Government stop the war, stop drafting "American youths for the dirty war," and withdraw all US troops so as to put an end to the fighting. The letter also called on the American people to raise protests against the US and the Thieu-Ky persecution of the "revolutionary forces" in South Vietnam.

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Dutch Government Avoids Crisis Over Vietnam

Issue: The government succeeded in its quiet efforts to undermine the resolve of leftists in Parliament to pass a resolution asking the prime minister to urge the US to stop bombing North Vietnam. The resolution, as finally voted, calls on the government to urge all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities.

The government may soon have another Vietnam problem on its hands, however. During a parliamentary interpellation, an opposition deputy asked Foreign Minister Luns whether the government would permit a session of Bertrand Russell's "War Crimes Tribunal" to be held in The Hague. Rather than precipitate a new crisis, Luns hedged in his answer.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi Says Communist Victories Make US Leaders "Utterly Nervous": Vietnamese Communist propaganda is placing considerable emphasis on the theme that the recent Viet Cong "victories" in South Vietnam have caused deep concern among US political leaders. A Hanoi broadcast on 7 February claimed that the "faked optimism" generated by President Johnson and General Westmoreland several months ago was now having "the bottom knocked out of it" by reports from South Vietnam. The broadcast alleged that the President is "utterly nervous" and cited US press reports that he had requested each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to sign a statement guaranteeing that Khe Sanh will not be lost to the Communists. Hanoi quoted the President as telling the Chiefs that

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"I don't want any damned Dien Bien Phu." The broadcast closed by appealing to "American friends" to side with the South Vietnamese revolution "for the sake of justice and humanity," and to urge the President "by your antiwar action" to bring the US troops home now.

A Liberation Front broadcast also on 7 February quoted Western press reports on recent statements by Senators Edward Kennedy and Morton. Kennedy was quoted as saying that the US would be wise if it admitted that the Viet Cong scored a striking political success during the last week. The broadcast also alleged that Senator Morton had admitted that the Viet Cong could inflict heavy damage on American positions whenever and wherever they choose and that the US is in a stalemate situation in Vietnam.

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